

Consistency

Consistency is the key to successful endurance training. By now you are hopefully into a routine (and by routine, we don't mean 'rut'). However, sometimes life gets busy and you may not be able to fit in all your workouts during the week. Missing the occasional workout won't hurt you and will not mean you cannot continue in the program. But you may need to evaluate your program design and ensure that you are realistic with the time you set aside for training. The general ground rule for a missed workout is: it is forgotten, and over. Do not try to cram in extra time or kilometers in other workouts to make up for it. Just resume with the next scheduled workout.

Then there is the other side of the coin....overtraining. Overtraining means doing more work than your body is able to recover from. For example, doing too much too soon, adding too many kilometers, adding too many days of training in a row and/or adding too much speed. Follow the plan and listen to your body, and talk to the coaches to help avoid overtraining.

It is the body's ability to adapt to the stresses placed on it through training that will allow the body to build and get stronger and faster. If you place too much stress on the body, or don't allow sufficient time to recover from training stresses, your body will break down rather than become stronger. Remember that stress can be both training-induced (good stress!) and life-induced (bad stress) so be good to yourself and listen to your body and mind.

Rest and Recovery

Rest can mean no activity or active recovery. Rest can include:

- Easy days. If the program says easy run/walk, don't be overly concerned about the pace of your run or walk. Active movement is a great way to deliver oxygen to the body but it does need to be done at an easy effort on recovery days.
- Get a good night's sleep. Your body best recovers from training while sleeping. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep every night.
- Naps during the day. If you know you have a hectic weekly schedule, plan an afternoon nap during the weekend to allow you to renew your energy. Naps as short as 15-20 minutes can provide a refreshing recharge.
- Cross-training. By adding other activities into your training program such as swimming, biking, etc., you can use other muscles, which can help to prevent injuries while still giving the benefit of the aerobic conditioning the other activities provide.

Another great way to monitor for overtraining is by knowing your resting heart rate in the morning. As mentioned, a good night's sleep is important and this is where your body recovers best. If your morning heart rate (taken within 5-10 minutes of waking and before rising) is 5-8 beats higher than usual, it is a good sign that the body is not recovering or you have not adapted to the effort, so this day should be an easy day or an off day. Remember we are not only talking about the stress from training, but stress from other life commitments that can take their toll on the body.

Keep an eye out for the following signs of overtraining. If you experience one or more of these signs it would be a very good idea to take the day off rather than train as usual.

- Resting heart rate 5-8 beats above normal
- Difficulty sleeping, falling asleep or staying asleep
- Sudden unexplained weight loss
- Clumsiness, bumping into things or tripping over things
- A feeling of malaise or lethargy
- Overall low motivation or no desire to train

The goal of the training plan is to get you to race day fit, motivated and ready to be the best you can be on that day. Enjoying what you are doing and not overdoing it are key to being at your best.